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As [inauguration](http://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2016-12-09/for-trump-inauguration-three-balls-and-a-parade) day nears for President-elect Donald Trump, the Supreme Court arm of his transition team has reportedly trimmed the list of potential nominees to replace the late Justice Antonin Scalia from nearly two dozen conservative jurists to just three -- and is focusing on filling two vacancies instead of just one.

As a result, the team is preparing to nominate Scalia's replacement [within days of Trump's inauguration](http://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2016-12-14/reince-priebus-expect-donald-trumps-supreme-court-nominee-around-inauguration), and is putting a second conservative jurist on deck. Should a new opening occur, the theory goes, the new president could nominate someone quickly -- delivering the prospect of a reliable, 6-3 Supreme Court conservative majority.

"He clearly understands he may have a chance to define the court for a generation or more and he is taking it very seriously," former Speaker Newt Gingrich, a Trump confidante, told Politico.

But the Senate's top Democrat delivered an unequivocal message to the incoming administration Tuesday night: Don't measure anyone for Supreme Court robes just yet.

"It's hard for me to imagine a nominee that Donald Trump would choose that would get Republican support that we could support," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer told MSNBC's Rachel Maddow Tuesday night.

Getting a conservative on the court early in his term would help Trump ease concerns among Republicans and others on the right who are skeptical of his conservative bona fides. Putting conservatives in control of the Supreme Court -- and nullifying the swing-vote power of Justice Anthony Kennedy, a conservative who sometimes votes with liberals -- has been high on the right's wish list.

Kennedy, 80, and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, 83, a member of the liberal bloc, are the court's two octogenarians, while Justice Stephen Breyer, another liberal, is 78.

The transition team is wagering that Trump would get an easy, early win by nominating a staunch conservative as Scalia's replacement: Senate Democrats would be less likely to engage in all-out [political warfare](http://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2016-12-02/donald-trumps-supreme-court-picks-could-ignite-a-war-with-the-left) over that nominee, since it would reconstitute a decades-long, 5-4 conservative majority, with Kennedy remaining a bit of a wild card for liberals.

If Trump gets a vacancy in the court's liberal bloc, however, it could trigger a scorched-earth battle with Democrats intent on preserving the status quo. Yet the transition team believes Trump could handcuff Democrats by nominating a conservative woman or a minority -- a move that would make opposition more difficult for some liberal senators.

Politico reports that Diane Sykes of the Chicago-based 7th Circuit federal appeals court and William Pryor of the Atlanta-based 11th Circuit, are tops on the list; Trump himself mentioned the judges in a primary debate last February, and they both made the [list of 21 judges](https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/donald-j.-trump-adds-to-list-of-potential-supreme-court-justice-picks) that Trump circulated during the campaign.

On "Fox News Sunday," Trump adviser Leonard Leo, executive vice president of the Federalist Society, said the president-elect wants the Scalia vacancy filled by late April, in time for the Supreme Court's spring session, choosing cases and hearing oral arguments. That's when the court is likely to hear significant pending cases on issues like immigration and transgender rights.